Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority

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June 30, 1998

Mr. Robert Perciasepe
Assistant Administrator for Water
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. Douglas P. Wheeler
Secretary of Resources
State of California

Mr. Lester A. Snow
Executive Director
CALFED Bay-Delta Program

CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on CALFED Bay-Delta Program (PEIS/EIR)

Gentlemen:

The Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority (TCCA) represents all the Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors who receive water from the Tehama-Colusa and Corning Canals. In addition to the water service contractors on the two canals in Tehama, Glenn, Colusa and Yolo Counties, the Tehama-Colusa Canal also provides conveyance water service to the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District and three Sacramento Valley national wildlife refuges. TCCA is a joint powers authority that has the full operation and maintenance responsibility for the two canals, and generates all its own operating funds through the conveyance service it provides.

The TCCA has reviewed the CALFED Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (Draft PEIS/EIR) and we appreciate the opportunity to submit formal comments on this important document. Our comments on the Draft PEIS/EIR will be broad, rather than specific, to cover the entire CALFED program. Although we support the general concept of CALFED, we can not support any of the alternatives as they are currently presented. Until a preferred alternative is developed and specific details are released, we will withhold our comments on the alternatives.

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Common Program Elements

If you consider the Common Program Elements as spokes on a wheel, they serve no purpose or benefit without the central hub to which they are each fastened. This "hub" is additional storage. None of the six elements can successfully stand alone, nor can they be totally successful together, without additional storage.

Additional off stream storage, filled with flood water, could help provide long-term levee protection by reducing the pressure placed on the Delta during the wet seasons. It could also free up on-stream (Shasta) flows to alleviate downstream water quality and temperature problems. The Ecosystem Restoration, Watershed Management and Water Transfers could all be accomplished successfully with additional storage.

Ecosystem Restoration

The Ecosystem Restoration Program, as it is currently written, conflicts with several of CALFED's goals and objectives. Significant third party impacts will be felt with the proposed meandering belts as a result of loss of flood protection and agricultural production. These impacts will be felt by local economies, as well as local government entities who rely on the tax base they provide, and should be mitigated. The ERP must protect private property rights, water rights and areas of origin.

The ERP proposes to convert up to a total of 304,000 acres of agricultural land for restoration purposes. The additional amount of water that will be needed to support these proposed land changes needs to be quantified in each area. Water supply and conveyance ability must be ascertained, along with an on-going maintenance cost and funding mechanism identified, before an ERP site specific program is implemented. The ERP must also be subject to a water use efficiency standard.

Land use changes must be mitigated, as well as the impacts experienced by third parties as a result of those land use changes. Area of origin watersheds need assurances that the CALFED program will work and that in the future, they will not be subject to additional ESA restraints.

ERP site specific information is outdated and should consist of the most current information available. For example:

1) *"In Tehama County, the Corning Canal siphon is being exposed as the bed degrades, and repairs will cost several million dollars."* (Vol. I, ERPP, Page 288, Stressor Description). The Corning Canal siphon was repaired and laid an additional 15 feet into the Tehama formation in 1994 for approximately $1 million. This information is 4 years out of date.

2) *"Late-migrating juvenile chinook salmon that pass RBDD in early spring most likely suffer the greatest losses because squawfish abundance is higher at this time of year...."* (Vol. I, ERPP, Page 318, Chinook Salmon as a Prey Species). The gates at the RBDD are now out of the water in the early spring until May 15th, when the majority of the juvenile have passed the area. This change was also implemented 4 years ago.

3) *"Sacramento squawfish are also more abundant at RBDD during spring,..."*(Vol. I, ERPP, Page 320, Opportunities to Reduce Predation). The Squawfish Derby, now held annually at RBDD, has been moved to late summer due to the lack of squawfish abundance in the spring.

(These are just a few examples of site specific data flaws and not meant to be all inclusive).

Water Use Efficiency

The Water Use Efficiency Program should recognize the federal contractors' obligation to the CVPIA conservation program as part of the Ag Water Management Council's MOU in it's acreage requirement for agriculture. Also, those who have voluntarily initiated conservation mechanisms in the past should not be penalized for the inability to further conserve by the denial of participation in the CALFED program for new water.

The Tehama-Colusa Canal service area is short 131,500 acre feet of water annually according to the CVPIA PEIS and as the Water Use Efficiency Component Technical Appendix 4-24 states: *"losses associated with agricultural water use in this region* (Sacramento Valley) *tend to return to the system of rivers, streams and aquifers. Reuse of these losses is widely practiced."* Users with conservation mechanisms and programs already in place in a region that *"does not have significant irrecoverable losses"* (CALFED Water Use Efficiency Component, Technical Appendix 4-24), should be given the same accessability to CALFED benefits as those users who have not participated in conservation practices in the past. A Water Use Efficiency Program must take into consideration that each region is unique and that a "one size fits all" program will not work.

Additionally, conserved water should not be considered new water under this program and third party impacts to ground water and water quality as a result of additional conservation measures should be mitigated. The program should acknowledge that conveyance seepage recharges ground water, where as land fallowing has the opposite affect. Land fallowing can also affect neighboring water quality by not providing the additional water needed to flush salts out of the soil system. These impacts should also be mitigated.

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Water transfers are not considered to be new water. Water sold as a commodity through a free market to the highest bidder will result in trading an ecosystem and economy for the highest dollar. Areas of origin must be protected and impacts felt by these ecosystems and local economies should be mitigated.

Watershed Management

Watershed Management Coordination Plans will only work when they are locally controlled and initiated. Again, private property rights and area of origin must be protected.

Financial and Assurances

Benefits and beneficiaries need to be defined before we can support a financial package for CALFED. The CALFED guideline of "getting better together" must also include agriculture. Agricultural water users need assurances that the impacts of water already converted to the environment through the CVPIA and ESA will be part of the "getting better together" concept. Assurances are also needed that the CALFED actions to be implemented will have **real** restoration results, with continued monitoring and "escape ramps" if the actions prove to be inefficient and ineffective. Agriculture needs to know that additional demands will not be made of agricultural users because of poorly managed or water-wasteful environmental programs.

In Summary

CALFED is probably the greatest opportunity we will have in our lifetimes to address and correct the water deficiencies we currently have, be they environmental, urban or agricultural, and we greatly appreciate being able to share in this effort. To succeed, however, the effort must be balanced. Agriculture must remain at the table as an equal stakeholder, not as a second class water user whose current water resources can be plundered without regard or concern for the consequences.

Sincerely,

Arthur R. Bullock
General Manager

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